

SEAPORTS, GATEWAYS BETWEEN LAND AND SEA:

The Portuguese seaport sector development in the beginning of the 20th century

Ana PRATA

Institute of Contemporary History

Faculty of Social and Human Sciences - New University of Lisbon

Av. de Berna, 26-C, 1069-061 Lisbon, Portugal

E-mail: prata.anafilipa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the way in which the Portuguese port sector was understood, regulated and administrated in the early 20th century.

The interest in this subject is justified by the need to understand Portugal's past, historically, economically and socially, within a framework where scientific material on the reality of the ports is somewhat lacking.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the ports were simply considered as entry and exit doors for products and people, and investments in their improvement and outfitting were motivated by circumstances. Ports were recognised as important because of their connection to the economic and trade sector, but the port question was not yet seen as being “*national*” and integrated.

It would only be within the context of war and its aftermath that Portugal, facing the weaknesses and failures of its port sector, would finally perceive the urgent need for a change of direction. In this context, the multiplication of the Autonomous Port Authorities (*Juntas Autónomas dos Portos*), which rose from two to fourteen between 1914 and 1926, must be understood as an attempt to make changes on the ground. It was on 30 September 1929, that Decree no. 17421 finally appeared, as the concrete formulation in the letter of law of what would come to be the *1st Phase of the National Port Plan*.

THE SITUATION OF THE NATIONAL SEAPORTS UP TO 1910

In the words of Honor Frost, *as a mill is driven by a stream, so a harbour must respond to the sea.*

In fact, the alterations and new needs that continually arise in terms of trade relations and the capacities of vessels demand that the ports be constantly adapted, so that they are capable of meeting the new challenges these alterations bring with them.

A modern seaport, just like seaports in the past, survives and flourishes by attracting traffic. If it fails to do so, to a sufficient degree, it is doomed to decline and decay or, at best, to marginalization. To respond to change and be part of it is a constant dilemma. Failure to adapt means, from the outset, condemning the economic and commercial performance of a port or the hinterland of the port region.

For a long time, however, the alterations were slower and the demands more gradual, so the substance of the interventions, improvements and constructions in the ports was simple and monotonous. Roughly, up to the Industrial Revolution, the value of the ports to the economy and to the societies was seen as a given, and did not give occasion for great reflection. It was only now and then that an investment was made in their

improvement. The majority of the interventions carried out generally had a specific purpose, seeking to correct a concrete, circumscribed situation, such as the repair of a bridge destroyed by storms or the removal of alluvium from the bar that had become blocked by debris swept down in the latest floods.

With the progressive perfecting of the art of sailing, seas, lakes and rivers ceased to be elements that separated peoples and were transformed into the preferred means of their communications. The technical transformations that accompanied the alterations in the industrial productive process closely followed those found in maritime transportation: a reduction in the number of sailing ships; an increase in the number, and above all, in the tonnage of the steamships, and later, of motor ships (decades of 1910 and 1920); the substitution of the wooden hulls for those of iron, and beginning in 1880 of steel; (...) the ship construction specialised in certain types of transport (refrigerator ships, for example).

This crescendo of maritime activity and development obviously had to have reflexes in the port sector. And according to Emílio Brogueira Dias and Jorge Fernandes Alves, the *expression 'port revolution' is appropriately applied to the profound transformations found in the circuits of international shipping in the last two centuries*. In fact, the constant alterations and bets on the improvement of the port infrastructures became evident and necessary.

With the start of the 20th century, the era of the *natural ports* ended and progressively gave way to the era of the *artificial ports*. Although many traditional ports carried on with their activities, all the ports *began to undergo major, continuous transformations, in an effort to fit them into the new routes of the large trade companies and to serve as rotating platforms for foreign trade*.

In the period preceding the 1st Republic there was the idea that the economic development of the country would be achieved, becoming attainable through a strong bet on the development of communications and transports, in this way, enabling and potentiating the circulation of merchandise, persons and goods. It was believed that in this way, at the same time the growth of production was being stimulated, the economic needs and development of the internal domestic market would also be boosted.

However, the budgetary weakness of the Portuguese State, the low revenues, the archaic nature of the institutions, the slowness of the processes, and the lack of audacity on the part of private initiative meant that the investments made for public works were almost always dependent upon external capital and the constant recourse to credit and indebtedness.

Despite the growing deficit, external indebtedness and unbalanced budget, the Regeneration sought to rescue the country from the economic and technological backwardness it was suffering from. However, the British ultimatum in 1890, the Portuguese bankruptcy in 1891, the economic and financial depression, the constant instability of the governments, and sundry dissensions were of no help in altering the state of affairs.

Around 1900, despite the progress and advances that had actually been made, it was quite evident that the distance between Portugal and the rest of the industrialised powers was still great.

Within the realm of the possible, large investments were made and important works of improvements and construction were made for national public works. In relation to the port sector, besides the recognition of the country's privileged location, there was also the awareness that it was crucial to endow the national ports with the conditions and means necessary to foster foreign trade relations.

But, many were the cases of abuse, carelessness and delays. The negligence with which many of our ports were treated would have weighty consequences for the national communications and economy, constantly casting doubt on the stability of the conditions offered by the Portuguese port sector and requiring emergency repairs and works that heavily burdened the coffers of the State.

In turn, the lack of basic data, both hydrological as well as topographical, made it impossible to easily and with the determination and rigour required make a study/plan for the valorisation and development of the nation's ports. In fact, this hypothesis was never ever considered. The interventions during these years of the monarchy had limited and focused purposes. Although the importance of the national port sector was recognised, along with the need to equip the ports with the conditions that would put them at the level of what was being done in the other European nations, the ideas and plans were laid out case by case, port by port, the absence of a global strategy being evident.

The major concern was not to develop the base structures to enable the country to be better integrated in the world trade routes, but rather, to first of all attract trade operations and shipping, believing that, by the development of trade, the other economic and industrial sectors of the national life would progress and flourish. This inverted logic, based on "ripple effects", reaped its fruits...

This stopgap approach and spur-of-the-moment works were the money pit of public funds, and without a strategy capable of equating the need for the development of the various national ports, and without a simultaneous bet on the development of the merchant marine and internal communications, had a limited effect.

If, in fact, it is *through trade that nations most enrich themselves*, it is crucial to guarantee the conditions for trade, wagering from the outset on the improvement of the national port infrastructures.

* * *

The history of the improvements in Portuguese ports is, then, a story filled with ambitions, indecision and difficulties.

The *Revista de Obras Públicas e Minas (Review of Public Works and Mines)* from 1870 to 1910 is perhaps one of the best sources to help us understand the concerns and attempted solutions that were being

presented in turn. We really believe that this *Revista* can be seen as a barometer of the importance attributed to the port sector. In fact, up to 1910, the texts and subjects that dominated its publications were related to the situation and the problems of the national ports. And several of the projects, plans and opinions that were being prepared in succession about the Portuguese ports were also guaranteed publication. We believe that, at the least, the importance given to such subjects evidenced a consciousness of the fundamental interest of the port sector. Although, in practice, few were the results of the national port interventions, this publication ended up representing an alert by the Portuguese engineering class and the reading public to the situation of the ports in the country.

We should also mention the various published accounts of study trips made to foreign ports. These were undertaken in the desire to learn about new procedures and acquire new skills for potential application to similar cases in the national territory. By this we perceive that there was a consciousness of the need to improve the ports, and that what happening abroad was being followed here.

Nevertheless, one thing is the consciousness of the importance of endowing the ports with the conditions needed for their regular functioning, and something entirely different is to have the consciousness of the indispensable need to define a national strategy for action, co-ordinating efforts, defining priorities and planning investments with the guarantee and safety of their future profitability. This, in fact, did not yet exist.

In these times, the ports were simply considered as entry and exit doors for products and people, and investments in their improvement and outfitting were motivated by circumstances. They were recognised as important because of their connection to the trade sector of the country, but there was not yet a “*national*” and integrated perception of the port question. The need to “repair” was recognised, but not that of “co-ordination” or “planning”.

* * *

The port work is, in truth, a continual process, in which some works, even when finished, besides being reversible or becoming inadequate, call for new works, regardless of the degree of execution of the previous plans. This is, in fact, the essence of the problem or the inconvenience of the port sector: the constant need for investment and attention.

In the Portuguese ports between 1880 and 1910, enormous sums of money were invested. But these investments many times were not carried out in the best way. On the one hand, the projects presented and executed were rarely based on solid grounds of research and an understanding of the way winds and tides function, which on repeated occasions proved to be a fatal mistake. On the other hand, acknowledging this gap, investment was frequently made in constructions of a temporary and precarious nature, which would be replaced once the base studies had been concluded. As it happened, however, these studies many times dragged out over long decades, and the port was left with fragile constructions that required never-ending

repairs. So, much greater amounts of capital ended up being spent on the conservation of these *temporary works*, without the port ever getting equipped with the conditions it needed.

* * *

In 1901, Engineer Adolfo Loureiro's study, commissioned by the Ministry of Public Works and which resulted in the work *Os Portos Marítimos e Ilhas Adjacentes*, had in view providing the Government with the knowledge of what had been done in the national ports and what was still left to do. *For the Government to be able to resolve what must be done in each one of our ports, it needed the knowledge of their past, their nautical conditions, the resources they offer, the works that had been done in them and the expenses they have entailed, as well as those works that they still need and their condition. Only with this knowledge can it make decisions correctly and conveniently for the country.* That is to say, at least until 1904, date of the beginning of the publication of the work of Adolfo Loureiro, such knowledge did not exist.

On the eve of the implanting of the Republic, the development of the Portuguese ports was, we might say, in an embryonic stage. The first large steps had begun to be taken in the direction of creating *modern* ports. But there was still a lot to be done.

Around 1910, the complaints about many of the national ports continued to centre on elementary questions: removal of alluvium, the lack of understanding of the systems of winds and tides, the need to break stones and rocks, the construction of piers for tying up ships, the installation of light houses and buoys, repairs of damage caused by bad weather or floods... The interventions continued to be carried out according to circumstances, even though they proved to be useless, money pits of public funds and hindrances to the development of a truly *modern* port sector. The main concern regarding ports had not yet shifted to the equipping of the port to make it capable of handling rapid exchanges and transactions; rather, the fear continued that the jetties would be destroyed in the following winter.

THE 1st REPUBLIC AND THE PORTUGUESE PORT REALITY

With the implantation of the Republic on 5 October 1910, a new political and economic cycle began in the country. So it was hoped.

However, in the first years, there was a period full of troubles, in the sense that trouble is marked by a lack of preciseness and definition. The feeling was that it was time to change strategies; but it was immediately acknowledged that the political class, newly come to power, had an enormous challenge on its hands.

In the matter of the port sector, as it was impossible to do everything at the same time, the pressing need was to orchestrate the priorities, dealing first of all with the most urgent and important improvements, whose

execution and completion would facilitate a second phase of execution of other repairs and works. Therein lay the most complicated difficulty, and in the end, nothing was decided in the first years.

In terms of the port sector, Ezequiel de Campos believed that *modern engineering already had much greater capacities, and was capable of resolving problems that a few years ago could only be hoped for. But the difficulties are so great, the works so costly and the results so uncertain that no Government will go out on a limb to build a modern port* without a sure guarantee of a return on the investments. The depleted state of the national treasury did not leave any margin for error. Doing nothing was not an option, it was the greater mistake.

It was imperative to change the course of actions so that the country could get on the road to economic rebirth.

During the republican period, despite the difficulties and failures, a greater concentration of effort was noticeable in some of the national ports, especially Lisbon and Douro-Leixões, and to a lesser degree, at Figueira da Foz, Viana do Castelo, Portimão, Lagos and Funchal. We believe that the inclusion of these ports is related to the acknowledgement that they would be the ones with the greatest possibilities for a return on the investments.

Although at the legislative level nothing substantially new materialized in comparison with the preceding period, here and there appear some nuances that allow us to see the outline of an alteration. If *the change* ended up not being carried out, we believe that it was being considered, at least.

WORLD WAR I (1914-1918): PORTUGAL'S DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN TRADE AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PORT SECTOR

Without taking up too much space, we point out that Portugal's participation led the country to experience *in extremis* all its debilities and weaknesses, and its high degree of dependence on other countries was obvious from the first.

The Portuguese economy had to look abroad, or to its colonies, to procure a set of goods that were indispensable for the functioning and satisfaction of its basic needs (obtaining coal, cotton, cereals, and other goods and raw materials). It would be expected that, in a conjuncture of war, where the essential priority of each country was to respond to the war effort and ensure its survival, Portugal would be facing serious difficulties. And what is more, this entire situation of need and external dependence, in itself quite restrictive, was aggravated by the insufficiency and archaic state of the Portuguese merchant fleet; only 10% of the Portuguese foreign trade was handled by national ships.

The general mobilisation of resources and available means of transport for the war effort therefore constituted a serious problem for Portugal, dependent as the country was, around 90%, on foreign commercial fleets, especially the British. The Portuguese merchant marine fleet, old and limited in its capacity, left to fend for itself, was unable to guarantee the regular provisions and supplies essential to the functioning of the national economy. Even when available products existed, Portugal's great drama was the lack of a merchant marine fleet prepared to transport them.

The consequences of all these obstacles are easy to understand: irregularity in the supply of raw materials, fuels and other goods; increased prices and more expensive shipping and maritime insurance.

The question of the national maritime restoration and the need for a renewal of the merchant marine, together with the external dependence in terms of transports, raw materials and consumer goods essential to the economic life are topics that deeply marked this period.

Another question, a crucial one without a doubt, but which tends to be forgotten and underrated in this whole context of the difficulty of transport and acquisition of goods abroad, is the vital role played by the ports in this whole process.

As entry and exit doors for people and goods, the ports are, in our view, an important link in the chain of economic relations and commercial trade of a country. And in a context of war, they are an essential step in the process of import and export of materials and products. The war context, if it did not accelerate the lack of conditions of the national ports, at least served to evidence them. Finally the improvement of the Portuguese ports was perceived as indispensable, to make them capable of competing with other international ports. Their good natural conditions were no longer enough, and, despite the large sums spent over the space of several years, little had yet been achieved in the sense of improving the national ports. The ports of the country did not yet have the characteristics of *modern* ports, with the exception, perhaps, of Lisbon and Leixões. There was still a long road ahead.

Perhaps the greatest inheritance of the War, in terms of the port sector, was the calling of attention to the conditions of the national ports. At last it was understood that it was not possible to bet on the development of many large ports, nor unthinkingly scatter funds among all of them.

In the entire process of advances, retreats and errors, the change in the course of events following World War I is undeniable.

After the war, the several nations acknowledged that *a good seaport corresponds to a good source of revenue. With that thought in mind, France and England, for example, are working feverishly to open up new ports. Unfortunately, only Portugal seems to ignore the great reach of new seaports (...). For the last forty years, the greatest expenditures of the State are on seaports, for us to be without ports and without money!...*

The concrete executions were small. Another war would have to remind the country that the lack of attention to the infrastructures that are most vital to its economic functioning would have grave consequences.

NEW OPTIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION OF THE NATIONAL PORTS?

Begun in 1911, the creation of the *Juntas Autónomas* (Autonomous Boards) must be seen as a continuing bet on the part of the 1st Republic, in pursuit of a greater regulation of the port sector, due to the persistence of the model despite the governmental instability.

Between 1911 and 1926, fourteen *Juntas Autónomas* were created for fourteen port national ports (among them the islands – Madeira and Azores).

One *Junta Autónoma* was a *local corporation, delegated by the Government*, dependent on the *Ministério do Fomento*. As a general rule, the goals of the *Juntas* were: *to direct, administrate and execute studies, necessary works, services, funds, revenues, subsidies and special taxes for the construction, improvement and operation of the port to which they were connected; to promote, by the means deemed most effective, within the laws in force, the development of the commercial and maritime traffic of that port; mandatorily carry out topographical surveys and plans needed for the works, as well as the inventory of the goods and real properties in their possession. They were also authorized to take out loans and lease, under tender, the execution of some works, but never without obtaining prior authorisation from the Government. Besides these, other more specific objectives could be established.*

From the foregoing, we note a substantial difference in relation to the period of the monarchy: these new *Juntas* were charged with the operation of the port and not just its administration. Herein lies another fundamental difference in terms of revenues, which will now include operational fees for the services of the port. These alterations gave a new autonomy to the new *Juntas* from the very start.

It is also worth noting further that fact that the greater part of the *Juntas Autónomas* (eleven), were created after World War I. This fact reveals the consciousness (in large part arising in the aftermath of the War), that it was necessary to intervene in the port sector.

In order to avoid reckless expenditures of capital, a bet was made on a local structure, dependent on the State, which, because of its proximity on the ground, would have a greater possibility of being fully informed of the real needs of each port. Seeing what was being adopted abroad, the Portuguese State placed a lot of hope on this new system. It was hoped that the national ports would be able to *make the leap*, and accompany the transformations in shipping and trade. This, however, did not happen.

Despite the greater administrative autonomy, in practice, all the decision continued to depend in large measure on the approval of the Government, and the supervision and watchful eye over all the interventions of the *Juntas* for works and improvements was also very tight.

As for financial autonomy, this was not achieved in the republican period. The revenues of the *Juntas* were never sufficient to meet their needs and expenses, and therefore, all the improvements and works continued to depend on public money.

***Juntas Autónomas* created in Portugal (1911-1928)**

Legislation	Description
Decree with force of law of 7 February 1911	Instituting in the city of Porto a « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the works of the City»
Ministerial Order of 23 August 1911	Ordering the creation of a special commission called Commission of Improvements of Figueira da Foz. [In 1921, « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> » will appear.]
Law of 23 April 1912	The name of the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the works of the City of Porto» was changed to « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the Maritime Installations of Porto (Douro-Leixões)»
Law nº 89 of 13 August 1913	Creates the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the Works of the Port of Funchal»
Law nº 216 of 30 June 1914	Creating a « <i>Junta autónoma</i> of the works of the port of Viana do Castelo and of the Lima River».
Decree nº 4405 of 14 June 1918	Instituting in the city of Lisbon a corporation called « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> for the construction works of the Navy Arsenal on the south bank of the Tagus» and regulating its powers.
Law nº913 of 29 November 1919	Creating a corporation called « <i>Junta</i> of the Mondego River»
Law nº 1149 of 14 April 1921	Authorising the Government to delegate in a local corporation to be set up in the city of Figueira da Foz, called « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of Porto and the Bar of Figueira da Foz», the power to administrate the works at the port and supplement the study of them, and promote the development of the maritime and commercial traffic of that port.
Decree nº 7880 of 7 December 1921	Creating the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the estuary and bar of Aveiro».
Law nº1:415 of 21 April 1923	Creates in the city of Tavira a local corporation, delegated by the Government, called « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the works of the Port and Bar of Tavira».
Law nº1:461 of 17 August 1923	Creates in the port of Vila Real de Santo António a corporation called « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the Commercial port of Vila Real de Santo António».
Law nº 1517 of 24 December 1923	Creates the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the works of the port and bar of Setúbal and the Sado River».
Law nº 1546 of 15 February 1924	Creates the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the works of the port and bar of Esposende and the Cávado River». Regulates its constitution and operation.
Law nº 1585 of 15 April 1924	Creates the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the commercial port of Lagos».
Law n.º1:608 of 16 June 1924	Creates the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the works of the port and bar of Vila do Conde and the Ave River».
Decree nº 14940 of 22 January 1928	Creates at Póvoa do Varzim a local corporation, delegated by the Government, called the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the port of Póvoa do Varzim».
Decree nº 15 110 of 5 March 1928	Institutes in the city of Angra do Heroísmo (Azores) a corporation called « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the works of the ports of Angra do Heroísmo».
Decree nº 15204 of 18 March 1928	Creates the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the port of Portimão».
Decree nº 15403 of 24 April 1928	Creates the « <i>Junta Autónoma</i> of the Joint Port of Faro-Olhão».

Source: *Diário do Governo*. Legislation published between 1910 and 1930.

CARELESSNESS OU INABILITY TO CHANGE?

First of all, we must understand the context of instability on the international level, which Portugal could not escape.

First, the World War, with the almost total paralyzation of maritime traffic, the devastating consequences arising from inflation, the lack of commodities, the human losses of the unprepared Portuguese

troops and the lack of a merchant marine that would guarantee national trade and commerce. Then, the post-war and the multiplication of the difficulties, the crisis of overproduction of the early 1920's and the monetary devaluation.

The international context was completely ill-suited for the republican ambitions. To regenerate the country and place it on a par with the progress of the other European powers proved to be complicated. Internally, the governmental instability, the permanent shortage of public money, the manoeuvrings of interests and influences, and some indecision, determined the rest.

It is certain that any work of maritime hydraulics is usually expensive and almost always subject to contingencies and unforeseen circumstances. It is equally certain that the conservation of ports almost always needs continual work of dredging and repair in order to prevent the port entry from becoming obstructed, or to prevent the ruin of the wharf, the protective jetties or other important works. It is further certain that the ports must accompany the changes and alterations that are constantly taking place in the vessels and in relation to the growing demands for port equipment and warehouses. However, *the process followed in the country, that of building here, or there, isolated works, could not produce its effects, and therefore, many times large sums of money were lost, spent on things imposed by the immediate needs, or as a consequence of complaints from localities that, in dreaming of future greatness, frequently led the central powers to condescend and make grants that they very well could have postponed.* For Araújo Correia, the lack of suitability of the national ports was not the result of any one inability to change, but rather the result of the lack of proficiency of the central powers themselves, who were incapable of defining a national plan of action and of acting, promptly and profitably, speeding up processes and works, and contradicting the customary *delay in their execution.*

Nevertheless, in the republican period, despite not having reached the point of approving explicit legislation that regulated/defined a plan that was national in scope, there was a clear change in the perception of the reality of national ports.

The multiplication of the *Juntas Autónomas* evidenced an investment strategy and an attempt at regulation, at least at a more basic level of locally identifying the true needs of each port, seeking to avoid the constant expenditure of funds in answering requests for repairs, dredging and small constructions, as was frequent during the Monarchy

Contrary to what has been suggested, there was systematic and continual work on the port sector during the 1st Republic, and the governmental and economic instability did not overpower the *persistence of the model.* The stability of the port sector in terms of organisation and ministerial structure also helps to understand the continuing steps that were being taken.

No plan is drawn up, no port policy is defined, but the ideas are already swarming about.

Otherwise, how does one explain that already in 1926, the Law on Ports is made public by the hand of the Military Dictatorship?

Decree n° 12757, known as the *Lei de Portos*, so easily attributed to the action and activity of the following period, was, in fact, a creation of the 1st Republic, being presented to the Parliament on 21 April 1926, still in the form of a proposed law, by the ministers Manuel Gaspar de Lemos and Fernando Augusto Pereira da Silva, respectively minister of Trade and Communications and minister of the Navy.

It is in this document that we find spelled out for the first time the *indispensable and urgent need to adopt a port policy that would make it possible to provide the country with these precious factors of economic development, in convenient conditions*. And it is also at this time that the political class itself acknowledges its lack of zeal in relation to the national port sector. *In truth, it is not understandable how (...) we let our ports go on in the state of genuine abandonment and misery in which they are generally found, and that we only respond when requested locally or on the spur of the moment to make improvements, with unorganised efforts, and then only one or another of them, and insufficiently at that. A general and efficient criterion must be established.*

In the proposed law presented to the Parliament, various defects and failures we have already been listing are focused on: the indispensable need to bet on a *limited* number of ports, not in an arbitrary manner, but with criteria, avoiding *great expenditure* with no results; the need to make a distinction between the action to be carried out in the commercial ports from that to be taken in the second- and third-level ports; the consciousness that there must be *a determination and establishment, in the first place, of the category and economic functions of each port*, classifying them; and the acknowledgement that the regime of administrative autonomy conferred on many of the ports through the *Juntas Autónomas*, did not work as planned, as these were continually requesting *help and financial aid*. In regard to the revenue of the ports, the proposed law stated that the revenues should be discriminated as originating from three sources: *from the port itself, from its hinterland, and from the central treasury of the State*.

Although the lack caused by the absence of a defined plan of national action for the port sector was recognised, the *leap* could not be taken, nor was there a *de facto* alteration of the reality of the national ports.

THE NATIONAL DICTATORSHIP: A TURNING POINT?

On 28 May 1926, a military uprising put an end to the 1st Republic. This outcome, taking into consideration the governmental instability, the financial and economic difficulties and the state of discontent that was general throughout the country, was not a major surprise.

It was in this context of the National Dictatorship that the important laws were finally published that would define in concrete terms the outlines of the national port policy.

On 4 December 1926, the *Lei de Portos* was published, which, with some alterations and additions, recovered the proposed law presented on 21 April, which was never voted on, nor even discussed, remaining *in the bosom of the committees*.

This decree, from the outset, established the option of *port concentration*. It recognized that, on the one hand, it was not possible *to build many ports at the same time*, and on the other hand, the *pulverization of resources* would bring with it the *unprofitableness of the efforts*. It was mandatory then *to concentrate energies*.

Also important is the new position adopted on the carrying out of works in the ports. These should, *as a rule, be executed by tender, by competent companies, whenever possible national ones, without losing sight of the indispensable and effective supervision, both technical and financial*. The idea, previously considered unadvisable, to give the works to “third parties” is definitively altered, it now being deemed that they should be given to those who know how to execute them and who are qualified to do so.

This port law, serving as the basis for the development of the ports of the continent and adjacent islands, also established the classification for the different national ports, dividing them into four categories, according to their importance and the volume of tonnage of cargo loaded and unloaded. The 1st-class ports, those that served as ports of call for important shipping lines or important networks of communications with the interior, with a high volume of goods and passengers were the exclusive responsibility of the State. Only four ports were placed in this category: Lisbon, Douro-Leixões, Funchal and Ponta Delgada, and at all of them the administrative model of the Port of Lisbon was adopted. The following were considered 2nd-class ports: Setúbal, Vila Real de Santo António, Horta (Faial Island – Azores), and all the fishing ports that were yet to be created. 3rd-class ports were: Aveiro, Faro, Figueira da Foz, Lagos, Olhão, Peniche, Portimão, S. Martinho do Porto, Tavira, Viana do Castelo and Angra do Heroísmo (Terceira Island – Azores). All the others were grouped together in the 4th category.

Besides classifying the national ports, this law also set the limits for the financial co-participation of the State in the construction of works; it established the resources of the *Juntas Autónomas* and the possible modes of operating and administering the ports; it defined the service entities of the port and their functions; and it provided for the creation of a dredging service capable of guaranteeing the conservation of the access and anchorages of the various national ports.

Article 6 stated that, in the construction as well as in the operation of the ports, the Government must always be represented in all the works and services by an engineer, who would be the port director or the Government inspector, depending on the type of administration.

Meanwhile, in 1927, new port legislation was published, specifically decrees nos. 14718 and 14782, respectively the Framework Legislation and the General Regulations of the *Juntas Autónomas* of the ports.

These laws defined in minute detail the principles by which all the *Juntas Autónomas* of the country were to be governed and managed, and established the mode of operation and the powers of each body. In this way, it was intended to do away with the disparities and nuances existing in the individual regulations of each of them

A few months later, decree no. 15644 of 23 June 1928 named a commission to proceed with the definition of the new classification to be adopted in the national ports. On 13 April 1929, decree no. 16728 was published, in which this definitive classification was established. To wit: a) 1st-class ports: Lisbon and Douro-Leixões; b) 2nd-class ports: Viana do Castelo, Aveiro, Figueira da Foz, Setúbal, Lagos, Portimão, Faro-Olhão and Vila Real de Santo António; c) 3rd-class ports: Sines, Albufeira and Tavira; d) 4th-class ports: Caminha, Esposende, Vila do Conde, Nazaré, S. Martinho do Porto, Ericeira, Vila Nova de Milfontes and Fuzeta; e) fishing ports: Póvoa de Varzim, Peniche and Sesimbra.

With the restoration of the finances of the State, there finally appeared to be possibilities for the execution of a plan of port works of a truly national scale. The first steps in the national port work had begun, which up to that time had been restricted to a few meritorious efforts with limited determination.

Decree no. 17047 of 29 June 1929 prepared the launching of some interventions, authorising the Government to take out a loan for the remodelling of the national port infrastructures, in light of existing projects, which were not to exceed 300 000 000\$00 escudos, however. Shortly afterwards, an effective *plan of action* appeared, which finally constituted the formulation in the letter of law of what would come to be the *1st Phase of the National Port Plan*.

Under decree no. 17421, of 30 September 1929 the first distribution of funds was made among the various ports, allocated for the improvement and excellence of their equipment and docking conditions. The programmed interventions were essentially directed to the ports considered to be of national interest (Lisbon and Leixões) and for the most important regional ports (Setúbal, Vila Real de Santo António, Aveiro, Viana do Castelo and Figueira da Foz), the conclusion of the works being projected for 1932. The amount initially allocated totalled 250 000 000\$00 escudos, an amount that in the end was greatly exceeded, as a result of delays in the fulfilment of the works contracts and various accidents that occurred.

Overall, the amount of the funds spent, both by the Ministry of Public Works, as well as by the port *juntas* themselves, together with various subsidies granted by the State, surpassed 394 million escudos.

The Portuguese port sector had entered a new phase. Or so it was expected...